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June 5, 2003

The Honorable William M. Thomas
U.S. House of Representatives
2208 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thomas:

Medicare reform offers an historic opportunity to provide our nation's seniors with a new pharmaceutical benefit and improved access and care. On behalf of Ahold USA and its six retail operating companies (BI-LO, Bruno's, Giant of Carlisle, Giant of Maryland, Stop & Shop and Tops), we are pleased to have the opportunity to support the bill you have developed with our industry committee because it makes several important improvements to Medicare.

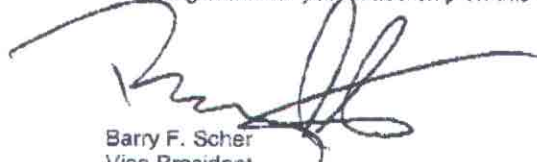
In particular, this bill is the first piece of legislation to explicitly allow for a new, broad range of competitive alternatives. This bill will allow our nation's retail pharmacists, pharmaceutical manufacturers and others to work together in order to offer drug discount cards or prescription drug benefit in competition with the traditionally conceived pharmaceutical benefit managers.

In addition, this bill allows retail pharmacists the opportunity to compete to provide seniors a better, more convenient way of receiving longer term, 90-day prescriptions. It also paves the way to give seniors the information they need to choose among competing plans.

It is important to ensure that seniors have access to adequate pharmacy networks. As the legislative process unfolds, representatives of Ahold USA look forward to working with you in evaluating the standards in this bill and in considering alternatives in the area of the transparency of aggregate information received by the government from the plan administration, as well as in potential risk sharing within the program.

With House passage of this legislation, our nation will take an important step forward toward significant Medicare reform.

We are grateful for your leadership on this issue.



Barry F. Scher
Vice President
Public Affairs/Communications

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Sincerely,



John J. Fegan
Vice President
Pharmacies